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SUBJECT: NEW BASRAH INA CHIEF'S VIEW ON SECURITY

REF: BASRAH 132

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,  
Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) On August 21, the Regional Coordinator (RC) and poloff paid a visit to the newly appointed head of the Iraqi National Accord (INA) in Basrah and member of the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC), Sayed Khalaf Shamhood. The discussion centered primarily on the security situation in Basrah and the operation of the security committee recently established by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Shamhood's view of the prime minister's security committee and its chief, General Ali Hammadi al-Musawi, was not favorable. He told the RC that the order from the prime minister regarding the security committee was a surprise to the BPC and caused confusion, and even friction, among its members.

¶2. (C) Shamhood said that concern over the prime minister's "usurpation" of the BPC's authority had led the BPC to decide initially not to cooperate with the prime minister's security committee. However, following the attack on the Basrah government building on August 16 by the Bani Asad tribe (believed to be in retaliation for the killing of their leader), Shamhood told the RC that the local government decided that the security committee could proceed with its work but only under the supervision of Basrah Governor Mohammed Wa'eli and the BPC. According to Shamhood, General Hammadi agreed to this arrangement. This understanding was confirmed in a separate meeting on August 21 between poloff and BPC member Sayed Salah al-Bataat. (See Reftel for General Hammadi's differing version of events.)

¶3. (C) Shamhood said that he does not believe Hammadi will be successful in establishing better security in Basrah. He lamented that, though requested repeatedly, General Hammadi has not provided the BPC with a copy of the committee's security plan for Basrah. Shamhood also expressed apprehension over the amount of support the security committee will receive from the central government, a concern he said he had raised personally with the prime minister. Overall, Shamhood was not optimistic that the security committee will improve Basrah's current dismal state of affairs.

¶4. (C) Comment: This was the first meeting between the Regional Embassy Office (REO) and the new head of the INA. Shamhood's predecessor was a close REO contact and provided valuable insights into the Basrah political scene. Shamhood said that he wanted to continue to work closely with REO staff, and his responses to the RC's questions were carefully measured, in sharp contrast to the bombast favored by many Basrah politicians. REO Basrah will explore ways of working closely with Shamhood, and it appears it will be a productive relationship. End comment.

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